

MANAS

VOLUME VII, No. 30

Fifteen Cents

JULY 28, 1954

ETHICS IN ECLIPSE

THERE is no novelty in the charge that modern civilization is the unhappy inheritor of amoral attitudes which have been accumulating in the West for three or four generations. Now, as the world threatens to rush down any one of several available avenues to destruction, it has become a commonplace of moralists to claim that the abandonment of traditional religious ideas could bring no other result—that the time has come, indeed, is almost past, for the prodigal son to return to his father's house, in shame and submissive humility.

If mere "wickedness" and arrogant self-will were the only explanation for the rejection of traditional religion by Western man, the counsels of the moralists might perhaps be accepted without argument, but the fact is that the notorious "amorality" of the recent past and present was at least in part a response to the natural and irrepressible longing of human beings for freedom and justice. It was the determination of men who embodied the developing intellectuality of Western civilization to seek the meaning of experience *directly*—without interpreters or priestly mediators—which led to the rejection of traditional moral ideas. These men, seeing the obvious moral obliquities in both the theory and practice of the churches, resolved to become *empiricists*. They would take their instruction from Nature alone; what Nature taught, they would accept.

At first, there were strong ethical currents in the thought of the Natural Philosophers. As time passed, however, and as the party of the empiricists gained in prestige and numbers, there were those among them who felt that ethics was almost as much of a hampering influence as the traditional morality. Nature, they said, knows nothing of good and evil. Man is a part of nature, they argued, and talk of "morality" and "right" and "wrong" is no more than a persisting remnant of the old theological psychology. We shall become really free by forgetting all this, by deducing our morals, should we happen to need them, from the course of human experience, as we go along. Thus even conscience became suspect, as a kind of weakness, a carry-over from the unenlightened centuries ruled by superstition and animistic tales of "gods," "souls," and other transcendental make-believe. This attitude eventually became the approved form of "modernism," and even an ideology or two developed from its "scientific" assumptions.

We need not attribute to modern amorality all the disasters which have overtaken the world during the past forty years to recognize the dark fruits of the eclipse of

ethics. Only a single example of amorality in practice is sufficient to show its devastation. The simple fact that many men—and many leaders of men—no longer feel any special compulsion to tell the truth is by itself enough to destroy the basis of civilization. Right now, it is destroying civilization in the United States. It is not "communism" which breeds the atmosphere of terror; this atmosphere results whenever, in either private or public affairs, a man is commonly expected to lie if he thinks it expedient, and when, before the bar of public opinion, what a man says is never deemed true simply because he says it. This is a moral sickness of civilization, more disintegrating in its effects than any sort of physical epidemic. It is disintegrating because it renders worthless the foundation value on which self-government depends—the mutual respect and trust of man for man. When men distrust each other, almost by instinct, imagination and vision are forgotten, and *guilt* becomes the primary value to which response is obtained. Men in public life plan their careers out of consideration of the need to avoid vulnerability to "charges." For in a society where truth is no longer important, to suffer accusation is the ultimate offense.

In a world where truth is no longer honored for its own sake, but only as a kind of "coin" to be used in manoeuvring for self-interest, ordinary human relations descend to a moral dead-end, proceeding in an underworld where intercourse of speech means nothing in its own terms, supplying, instead, only clues to the "real" state of affairs which the individual seeks to understand. This is one of the worst things about the modern detective story, apart from its violence, for in these stories the idea of respect for truth is often lost sight of entirely. It sometimes seems as though we have been living so long in this general atmosphere that we do not realize how much we have lost—how much of the natural happiness of life departs, how vulgarized and shallow is existence in a society where truth is a unit of trade rather than an end in itself.

It seems likely that, since the abandonment of ethics was justified by raising the method of empiricism to the position of authority in modern theories of knowledge, the restoration of ethical values will first be accomplished by the same means. The new ethicists—the men who speak of the importance of moral principles in voices which have the ring of authentic discovery—are usually those who have grown up in an environment of scientific thinking, or have worked in fields where firsthand investigation has been



Letter from

ITALY

DEAR FRIENDS IN AMERICA: We have been observing the Italian scene at close range for several months now, and here are some of our impressions:

The chief thing we found is that the problems of Italy are mainly the problems of the south. When you go to the provinces south of Rome, after having lived in the north for a while, it is like going into another country. Ignorance, poverty and superstition increase as you go south and become worst in Calabria and Sicily. According to one newspaper report, the very poor in northern Italy amount to about 1.5 per cent while in the southern provinces they reach a high 38 per cent. Illiteracy, malnutrition and other deficiencies reach the same percentage. School attendance is not enforced, the schools are few and poorly equipped, and teachers not adequately trained for the colossal job before them. Many shrug their shoulders and tell you that the south has always been neglected and poor, but this does not explain why. There are some who say that, because the north is closer to the center of Europe and more developed industrially and economically, it receives more attention by the central government and fares better in all things. But why is the north more developed?

The south of Italy, for centuries before Italy became united, was ruled by tyrannical rulers who exploited the land and its people. A sort of feudalism was the rule, ignorance and poverty the result. Indeed, you find a sort of feudalism still present today in the wealthy landowners who lord it over entire communities from their comfortable rich homes, inspiring awe and obedience in the peasants who, to keep in their favor, do everything they are told. Education has been neglected in the south for many years. It was in the wealthy owners' interest not to enlighten peo-

ple honored above other ways of inquiry. We are not especially impressed when those who represent the old moralizing tradition—who have somehow managed to get through life without being touched by the scientific and skeptical revolution—preach at us about the old-fashioned virtues. They do not even understand why the virtues have been at a discount for several generations. Being untested and untempted themselves, they are in no position to instruct us. They are only another gang of "accusers" whose charges, by historical accident, happen to coincide superficially with the growing realizations of serious men.

The true reformers of today are those who recognize a non-theological, organic relation between the mental health of human beings, both individual and as society, and certain ancient ethical principles which seem as old as man. It is too early, perhaps, to seek to improve upon the findings of this new empiricism by suggesting that a metaphysical reality may underlie man's need to honor truth—that truth is the actual substance which nourishes the spirit in man, even as food of another sort nourishes his body; yet such speculations are hard to avoid. It is an idea which might explain the *rise* of civilizations, just as more familiar attitudes do much to account for their fall.

ple too much, and in this they were aided by the established Church, which had much to gain by being on the landlords' side. There is a trite saying here that the Church always allies itself with the strong. Today she is the backbone of the Democrazia Cristiana, the political party in power, and since this party is being strongly fought by the communists, she is doing all she can to support it. With the many years of poverty and oppression and the low pay of employees, men had to look elsewhere for additional income, and often compromised with their consciences to take it where they could, till now it has almost become a habit.

Among the many bad features of fascism there was a bright spot, and this was the effort to improve the south. But since the war this effort has slowed down. The present Christian Democratic government is really the voice of the Church, and the Church frowns on all progressive movements. Perhaps because it fears that the people, made aware of their needs and rights, will demand reforms which will affect adversely those who are in the saddle, living a life of ease among so much want? She has tremendous influence through the rich landlords, the political opportunists, and the huge number of priests and nuns who have charge of many educational and welfare institutions. Their influence is specially felt on election days.

With very few exceptions, public assistance is in the hands of the Church. The government has turned over to the Pontifical Commission of Assistance much of the patrimony of the Opera Nazionale Balilla left by the fascists, consisting of buildings and equipment which was used for the welfare of the youth of the nation. Orphan asylums, fresh-air colonies, homes for the sick and many schools are in the hands of nuns or priests, who enjoy priority in aid and many privileges. This might not be so bad if it were not used as a weapon for political favors and propaganda.

Relief work, except that done by individuals, must go through the ECA, or Ente Comunale di Assistenza, and I hear that even the clothing donated by Friends, through their office in Rome, must be distributed through this agency. The commission entrusted with the handling of international relief has found an even more suitable way to dispose of the bales of clothing which come from abroad: they sell them at auction without even opening them, and distribute the money thus collected through ENDSI, or Ente Nazionale Distribuzione Soccorsi in Italia. It is a known fact that most of it goes to help those who are of the right political color, and how well the grants to the various communities are administered is seen by the following story: in the city of Lecce in Puglia a rather progressive and just mayor happened to be elected; one of the first things he did was to dismiss 7 out of 10 city employees whose job it was to administer a yearly grant of 10,000,000 lire, or about \$16,130, for social work. The 10 employees were drawing an aggregate salary a year of about 5,000,000 lire, so that only half the whole amount was left. The mayor thought that three people were enough for this job.

What happens to the used clothing which comes out of the bales? It is resold to small dealers and you may see it displayed on the sidewalks and the pushcarts of every town, vociferously advertised as fine American clothing at cheap prices, but even these prices are too high for the very poor

(Turn to page 7)



REVIEW

SCIENCE JOINS THE HUMANITIES

WHILE it is no more than coincidence that Simon and Schuster brought out a book by J. Robert Oppenheimer a few days after the Atomic Energy Commission's rejection of the services of the noted physicist, on the grounds that he is a "bad security risk," its appearance at this time is especially appropriate. First of all, *Science and the Modern Understanding*, made up of six radio lectures delivered by Dr. Oppenheimer last November and December in England, is more than a "good" book on the evolution of modern physics. It is a book which is likely to become a milestone in the development of scientific self-consciousness, an earnest of the maturity in outlook of the scientist of tomorrow.

We have read three reviews of the book and the book itself. Lewis Gannett's *Herald Tribune* notice is largely quotation, for Gannett feels that "a few paragraphs culled mostly from the final chapter . . . may tell more of the essential faith and nature of this man than columns of testimony." Waldemar Kaempffert, *New York Times* science editor, observes that while the lectures "bear no relation to the recent investigation of Dr. Oppenheimer as a security risk, they do illuminate his character and his habit of thought. A passing reference to communism and his distaste of its underlying philosophy reiterates what he has already said on the subject." Joseph Wood Krutch, in the *Herald Tribune Book Review*, discusses and quotes the book approvingly, omitting any mention of Oppenheimer's recent ordeal, perhaps as beneath notice.

Naturally enough, we are pleased to find our own feelings confirmed by reviewers for whom we have considerable respect. For these men, we think, would agree that a man who writes a book of this sort has produced a better defense of his personal integrity than any amount of "routine clearances" could afford. The point, here, is that an investigating committee would probably be very much puzzled if anyone were to offer this claim as a matter of "evidence" in regard to Oppenheimer. For the members of such committees, the civilized community of the mind has no language with which to address the political community of the national state. The two are alien hegemonies, separate spheres of being, without even legations to bring them together.

The merit of Oppenheimer's book is not a matter of "brilliance," but in its manifestation of the humane spirit. Few modern works go as far as this one, or are as successful, in defining the appropriate role of science in modern thought. Only a bowing acquaintance with the development of Western intellectuality is enough to make clear the fact that science has occupied varying levels of authority during the three hundred years or so of its history in the West. It began as an interloper, an invader of regions once governed by theological dictators. Its earliest representatives were made to feel the repressive power of the

Church. Copernicus found his book carefully edited for "security reasons" by his printer. Galileo was hounded by the Inquisition into withdrawing his evidence for the heliocentric system, and prudence caused Descartes to ignore the great discoveries of the early astronomers. The seventeenth century, however, brought Isaac Newton and the final vindication of the Copernican theory. The next two hundred years were spent in consolidating the authority of scientific discovery and method. In the nineteenth century, the expectation that science would eventually explain away all the mysteries of matter and life was by no means a new idea. After Darwin, a breed of scientific dogmatists gained sway over the popular realm of scientific thinking, and the mere word "science" acquired importance in the formulation of slogans. Marxism, for example, owed much of its popular success to being labelled *scientific* socialism. In the twentieth century, especially in the United States, astute practitioners of merchandising techniques turned the symbols of scientific research into icons of advertising. The test tube and retort, the trim white laboratory jacket, the austere countenance of the man Consecrated to Truth—these are symbols which have moved endless goods for American manufacturers, and are still effective stimuli to human belief in claims made in the commodity market. "Science says" has been, in short, a "last word" in compelling persuasion for at least two or three generations.

This state of mind represents a naïve faith in the power and resources of science, hardly different in any significant way from naïve belief in the power and resources of religion. It is a state of mind which receives from Oppenheimer an intelligent and firm rejection. Reviewing the transitions in the role of science, he says:

One even finds the science of great scientists taken in the name of those scientists for views and attitudes wholly foreign and sometimes wholly repugnant to them. Both Einstein and Newton created syntheses and insights so compelling and so grand that they induced in professional philosophers a great stir of not always convenient readjustment. Yet the belief in physical progress, the bright gaiety, and the relative indifference characteristic of the Enlightenment, were as foreign to Newton's character and preoccupation as could be; but this did not keep the men of the Enlightenment from regarding Newton as their prophet. The philosophers and popularizers who have mistaken relativity for the doctrine of relativism have construed Einstein's great works as reducing the objectivity, firmness, and consonance to law of the physical world, whereas it is clear that Einstein has seen in his theories of relativity only a further confirmation of Spinoza's view that it is man's highest function to know and to understand the objective world and its laws.

Often the very fact that the words of science are the same as those of our common life and tongue can be more misleading than enlightening, more frustrating to understanding than recognizably technical jargon. For the words of science—relativity, if you will, or atom, or mutation, or action—have been given a refinement, a precision, and in the end a wholly altered meaning.

(Turn to page 4)



Issued weekly by the
MANAS PUBLISHING COMPANY

P. O. Box 112, El Sereno Station
LOS ANGELES 32, CALIFORNIA

\$5 a Year

15 cents a Copy

THE ITALIAN SOUTH

THIS week's Letter from Italy unavoidably recalls Carlo Levi's remarkable book, *Christ Stopped at Eboli*, which tells of the years spent by the author in Lucania, a small village in the South of Italy. The old tradition, on which Levi's title is based, is that Christ, when he came to Italy, went no further south than Eboli, so that the rest of the country remained pagan, without the grace of the Saviour, and barren of hope. From what is said in this letter, it appears that while the Church has established itself in the South, the spirit of Christ is still absent.

By reading Levi, however, one experiences again the resources of an artist who makes the sordid lives of the incredibly poor peasants of the village reveal an underlying humanity, and who turns his enforced stay in that sterile countryside into a period of precise diagnosis of their misery. Nevertheless, there are very few "judgments" in *Christ Stopped at Eboli*. It is the art of the writer to communicate without making overt judgments—to let the reader "see for himself."

But in another book, written five years earlier, although not published until 1950, Levi exposes his capacity to deal with the essential factors of decay in modern civilization. This book, *Of Fear and Freedom*, is almost written in a cipher, for it was done in Mussolini's Italy, yet it is as profound an indictment of the Religion of the State as Dostoevsky's chapter on the Grand Inquisitor is of Roman Catholicism.

In a few words, Levi sketches the insidious invasion of the cult of the State:

Art grows into monotonous repetition, into a litany, or else it becomes a desperate and impossible groping for freedom, nostalgia, or hope. The sense is lost of living relationships, for they are replaced by a single relationship, which is symbolic and arbitrary. Cities grow by peripheral progression, like unicellular organisms, and spread through the countryside like a shapeless liquid. Culture, which consists everywhere and at all times of a universal and absolute ability to make distinctions, has no meaning at all, in the indistinctness of the mass. And thus, instead of culture, there stands its religious equivalent, a totalitarian, arbitrary will of confusion, which expands, as matter does, by propagation, and which is valid not as a value, but as a weight: *propaganda*, the culture of the masses.

This, then, is the process of dehumanization. Quite plainly, it is not an exclusively Italian affliction.

REVIEW—(Continued)

Thus we may well be cautious if we inquire as to whether there are direct connections, and if so of what sort, between the truths that science uncovers and the way men think about things in general—their metaphysics—their ideas about what is real and what is primary; their epistemology—their understanding of what makes human knowledge; their ethics—their ways of thinking, talking, judging, and acting in human problems of right and wrong, of good and evil.

Oppenheimer's view of the role of science, as we read what he says, seems to be that it introduces a special kind of *rigor* to the study of certain areas of experience; and that while no final conclusions may result in respect to great philosophical questions, there is bound to be a transfer of both mood and discipline to other fields. It is, in brief, a valuable exercise, immeasurably productive on its own account, yet perhaps even more useful as supplying evidence of how knowledge may be acquired. But science is not a closed system of indisputable Truth—it is rather a "floating" system of disciplines and methods, to which we may refer, through which we may learn, but from which we must never gather a proud harvest of absolutes. As Oppenheimer says:

... if there are relationships between what the sciences reveal about the world and how men think about those parts of it either not yet or never to be explored by science, these are not relationships of logical necessity; they are not relationships which are absolute and compelling, and they are not of such a character that the unity and coherence of an intellectual community can be based wholly upon it. . . .

It is my thesis that generally the new things we have learned in science, and specifically what we have learned in atomic physics, do provide us with valid and relevant and greatly needed analogies to human problems lying outside the present domain of science or its present borderlands. . . . the general notions about human understanding and community which are illustrated by discoveries in atomic physics are not in the nature of things wholly unfamiliar, wholly unheard of, or new. Even in our own culture they have a history, and in Buddhist and Hindu thought a more considerable and central place. What we shall find is an exemplification, an encouragement, and a refinement of old wisdom. We shall not need to debate whether, so altered, it is old or new. . . .

In these terms, and as Oppenheimer reveals in the lectures which follow, Science has joined the Humanities. It is a partner in the enterprise of human knowledge, not a bullying usurper of authority. It is a friend of wise men who have the habit of deliberate uncertainty, and a teacher
(Turn to page 8)

MANAS is a journal of independent inquiry, concerned with study of the principles which move world society on its present course, and with search for contrasting principles—that may be capable of supporting intelligent idealism under the conditions of life in the twentieth century. MANAS is concerned, therefore, with philosophy and with practical psychology, in as direct and simple a manner as its editors and contributors can write. The word "manas" comes from a common root suggesting "man" or "the thinker." Editorial articles are unsigned, since MANAS wishes to present ideas and viewpoints, not personalities.

The Publishers

CHILDREN ... and Ourselves

It may seem contradictory to preach at parents concerning their failings in a Department which strenuously objects to the habit of preaching to children, but some faults of parental attitude are so universal that frequent reminders seem called for. Take for instance the tendency of parents to expect progeny to duplicate their own accomplishments.

You may go a long way and do a lot of talking around the neighborhood before you find anyone who holds that it is justifiable to expect specific accomplishments of children, but the neighbor who was or is a good athlete usually *does* expect his boy to be the same or better, the "good Republican" or "good Democrat" expects his young to become the same, and the music-lover hopes for similar appreciation from his child, etc. (On the other hand, actual musicians and artists, who do more than "appreciate," are much more likely to reflect a "let every man and child follow his inner bent" attitude.)

Thus a considerable measure of confusion exists on this subject, and a discrepancy between theory and practice. People simply do not behave according to the recommendations of the psychologists they read—nor, for that matter, are we convinced that all psychologists actually digest all of their own prescriptions. In other words, while our mental therapists have been convincing enough in showing the harm to personality which can result from attempts to press children into a prefabricated mold, we don't have either the religious or philosophical foundation for a genuine belief in the autonomy of the individual—even though our much admired democracy must logically rest upon this base, too. Therefore, just as we make things tough for the Marxian non-conformists in political life—which we wouldn't do if we really believed that each man must make up his own mind and be allowed to do so in his own way—we make life tough for our progeny, expecting them to manifest the abilities we think they should have inherited from us. In short, the doctrine of heredity has entered very deeply into the mental life of Americans, just as the doctrine of environment has become a dogma of Marxist socialism.

One either believes that other people are ends in themselves, or that they are really means to *his* ends. Often both disciples of heredity-doctrine and environmentalists are naturally inclined to the latter view. For if we believe that environment makes the man, we may think it our *duty* to make him over, and if we believe that heredity determines character, we certainly feel that our children should make full use of the endowments obtained from us.

It does seem so "natural" to expect our children to like the things we like, to glory in the same studies and amusements. Of course, there may be no special reason why things shouldn't work out that way. But the point is that the children themselves need the chance to make such decisions, while our own best policy is one of self-restraint. We have seen "father and son" athletic combines in tennis and golf which were both successful and the occasion of much happy

comradeship between the two—and we have seen others which were tragedies, because the poor youngster was merely trying to please a domineering parent, failing, and suffering still more through the failure. And here athletic endeavors may serve to represent similar complications of relationship which occur at the mental and emotional level. As between parents and children, both the similarities and the differences of essential temperament are important, and one has no right to assume that because the similarities are present, certain essential differences do not also exist. The boy who enjoys a certain sport with his father, the girl who likes to do the things her mother does, may not attach the same importance to these shared activities. The child of scholarly parents is apt enough to be good at scholarship, but he may have a greater desire for engineering. And before he discovers engineering, he may pass through a considerable number of disappointing years, years filled with activities which reflect his parents' ambitions rather than his own.

The worst thing about expecting our children to like what we like and be good at what we are good at, is that lack of spontaneity makes top-grade performance impossible. The youth trying to follow in his father's footsteps without a genuine personal desire to do so will always fall short of expectations. His concentration will wander, and, when the results of his incomplete devotion become manifest, he will be extremely conscious of what appears to be failure—the more so since his *actual* accomplishment, dutifully achieved, which might have given a measure of satisfaction to one who is really interested in what he is doing, will mean little or nothing. What he has done has not been done for its own sake, but in order to produce a favorable psychological effect upon a watchful parent. Thus failure is *only* failure, never a goad to further determination. By such means a child's spirit may be broken.

Perhaps the best way to protect ourselves from perpetrating such evils is to imagine that our children are our psychological opposite numbers, rather than our duplicates. For that which can be genuinely shared will be shared in any case, and there is no disappointment for the man who doesn't expect anything.

Here, however, we are not primarily concerned with the parents' state of mind, except as it affects the young and sensitive. The children who feel that their parents are interested in them, happy to share whatever can be shared, but who also feel free to make their own unique contributions to the family's stock of ideas and habits, will have *both* security and freedom.

It's all right—quite "natural," that is—for parents to expect children to make a contribution to family welfare and happiness, but it's all wrong to expect this to be done in a prescribed way. And, as often suggested here, one of the greatest gifts anyone can enjoy is that of constantly being presented with contrasting ideas and attitudes. If our children do not share our favorite ways of spending time and energy, if their ideas turn out to be startlingly different from our own, they *may* be considered our benefactors. For we have a chance to do more thinking, are encouraged, *perhaps*, to reevaluate ideas which have held unquestioned reign in our minds for a long time.



FRONTIERS

RELIGION

SCIENCE

EDUCATION

Best Speech of the Year?

AFTER reading in the *Congressional Record* Senator Edwin C. Johnson's recent speech on "The War in Indochina," our first reaction was, "Can such things be?" For this is a remarkable document—so lucid, penetrating, and courageous that one can be pardoned for feeling a small glow of hope concerning even the congressional future. Our second reaction was to save as much space as possible for reproduction of salient passages. (Copies of the entire speech [of April 26] may be obtained by writing to the Hon. Edwin C. Johnson of Colorado.)

Sen. Johnson begins with an impartial account of historical transition in Asia. He then proceeds to an assessment of the failings of the self-satisfied Western democracies, concluding with an admonition to his constituents that involves much more than the impressive rhetoric in which it is embodied. Portions of the speech follow.

Asia is in revolution—revolution against colonialism. The promulgation of what we in America believe are the inalienable rights of every man, and the right to walk as equals with dignity in the world community, is sweeping Asia. The spirit which animated the American Revolution and the French Revolution of the eighteenth century, and Bolivar's great cause in South America in the nineteenth century, has taken firm root in Asia in this century. Nationalism, which began with the restive forces of Sun Yat Sen in China, and the establishment of a constitutional monarchy in Japan, has swollen to flood tide in Asia since World War II. The successful independence movement of Gandhi in India, the successful revolt of Indonesia, and the independence of Burma, Pakistan, and the Philippines, are but manifestations of the revolution against colonialism in Asia. To these let us add the present war in Indochina, which, in fact, had its start almost 30 years ago.

Colonialism must go in Asia. Washington, tagged successfully by our enemies as the great defender of colonialism and imperialism, must awaken to the realities of the current revolution in Asia against these evils.

Nationalism, inspired originally by America, is being thwarted by America, with the aggregate effect of driving independence movements to Moscow and the forfeit of America's traditional role as freedom's refuge. In terser language, we help the cause of world communism by failure to stand solidly for the cause of world democracy. In fact, in the minds of a great many Asiatics and Europeans, and members of the Arab States as well, America does not quite know what it is for, and only faintly what it is against.

In our appraisal of the political situation on the continent of Asia, we may have been susceptible to a fundamental error. The geometric theorem which declares things equal to the same thing are equal to each other, when fol-

lowed in the very inexact science of politics, demonstrates clearly the rule of logic which states that the more logically one proceeds from an illogical premise, the more illogical one becomes. We are a freedom-inspired Nation, devoted to the tenets of democracy, but Communist China makes the same claim. Shrewdly China points out that we are the defenders of the white man's policy of exploitation, and as a result of our actions the natives believe this false propaganda.

When it comes to sending our troops and treasure half way around the world to fight in defense of colonialism, we cannot take comfort from the fact that an Asiatic does not know any more about us than we do about him. The penalty is more than loss of troops and treasure, infinitely more.

* * *

During the past year I have sought to arrive at some positive conclusion about the Indochina issues, and, in all honesty, I am unable to support the belief that the present conflict between the French-supported Vietnam and the rebel Viet Minh is, in truth, a war of the forces of freedom, on the one hand, and the forces of communism on the other hand. Soviet communism, with its contempt for the rights of the individual, is a despicable tyranny. But it is not the only tyranny. Unbridled imperialism, the law of the jungle that says the strong shall devour the weak, the "haves" shall exploit the "have nots," is no less despotic, no less contemptible, is no less the uncompromising enemy of our American principles of life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness, than is Soviet communism.

So often causes are confused by labels, and labels with dogmas, and dogmas with principles, until it becomes difficult to find, much less to evaluate, the fundamental issues. These elements are distorted even more by careless thinking, until an uninformed people become a confused people, and, in the end, a dismayed people whose own ignorance has allowed it to be shabbily used.

As recently as 5 years ago the Viet Minh were not labeled, even by the less responsible press, as Communists. As recently as 5 months ago they were not so identified, even by the French. In fact, even 90 days ago dispatches from Saigon discreetly and consistently called them the Communist-led Viet Minh, but never the Communist forces, or the Communist Viet Minh. At what point, and to what degree, has this war, which every record shows to have been a war for freedom and independence, a war against imperialism, at what point did it suddenly become a war of Communist aggression?

The genesis of reasoning lies in distinguishing fact from fancy, truth from untruth. In examining the whole far-eastern question I have tried painstakingly to substantiate each belief as fact before relating it in terms of its by-

product, before evaluating it in terms of a conclusion that may be drawn from it.

It is a fact that more than two-thirds of the world's population goes to bed hungry every night. It is also a fact that most of that two-thirds lives in Asia. It is no less a fact that communism breeds on poverty and want. But to conclude, unreservedly, that all Asia is a breeding ground for communism is to commit a folly of reasoning which, from the start, places us on false premises.

It is also a fact that man does not live by bread alone, that spiritual forces are more potent in most southeast Asiatic communities than political forces, and that these ancient peoples, of strong spiritual convictions and mature cultures, have shown a marked reluctance for accepting any new political ideas. All these facts have been significant deterrents to attempts to propagate Mr. Marx's materialism.

Asia is seeking, almost desperately, for something to hold onto, something that will spare it the destruction and misery it has known too well and too long. If that something can offer the faintest promise of hope for overcoming the manifold hardships of war, it will win converts.

Several months ago a courageous and aroused group in the French Chamber of Deputies, not Communists either, demanded that their government come to peaceful terms with the Viet Minh in Indochina. Due to a certain amount of luck, the French Government has staved off a vote of confidence on this question, knowing, perhaps, that only the greatest miracle could prevent its parliamentary collapse if a vote were demanded. Within the past 10 days we have been treated to the spectacle of seeing the French Premier and the French Ministers slapped and abused in the streets of Paris by Frenchmen, and not Communist Frenchmen, because of the seemingly determined attitude of the present government to sustain a war that every Frenchman, and all France's allies save one—the administration in Washington—knows it cannot win. France needs and seeks desperately a way in which she can retire with some honor, without being confronted with complete disintegration of her overseas possessions. In a nutshell, that is what disturbs the remaining Frenchmen who cling to the Victorian dream of a farflung French Empire.

Yet what are we doing about it? Are we finding France a way "to get off the hook?" Are we helping them to save face and withdraw with honor? Or are we giving them false encouragement in the form of greater and greater military commitments? Last week the Secretary of State sent an appeal to the nations of the Pacific, and then went on a barnstorming tour of France and England, in a grandiose scheme to rally forces to a course of collective action in Indochina. What was the result? All of us know it too well. Not only did the Philippines, India, and Japan vote it down unreservedly, but England and France herself sent the Secretary of State home in such terms as to leave no doubt that they wanted no part of his plan.

Why would they not rally with us in a war to stop Communist aggression? Simply because they know that the war in Indochina is not a war of Communist aggression. They know that the forces opposing France's colonial rule in Indochina are just. They know that if these forces are getting help from Communist China, it is because the true

friends of freedom in the West have forsaken them. They know, too, that if Communist China is selling equipment to the Viet Minh, the Viet Minh are being made to pay dearly in rice, coal, and minerals for every bit of aid they are getting. They know, also, because we have never attempted to hide it, that the United States has committed more than a billion dollars worth of equipment, and now seems ready to commit even more, to help France—all of which from their point of view might well justify China in helping her southern neighbor with traffic in arms and munitions.

Suppose, for example, Mexico were conquered and held by an Asiatic power. Suppose the people of Mexico rose up and struck down their oppressor. Then suppose an even stronger Asiatic power intervened, to support the status quo. What would our position be? What would we do? Would not we feel obligated in the name of freedom to give our Mexican neighbor revolutionists all aid and comfort? And if the other Asiatic power embarked troops in Mexico, would not we also feel justified in sending our forces to drive them out?

* * *

Whether every one of the 24 million people of Viet Nam is a Communist or whether or not one of them is, is not the question. If all of them are Communists, what is to be accomplished by sending 10 American divisions there, to make them live as we want them to? The only way to combat an idea is with a better idea. What better idea is being advanced by our sending tanks and bombers to slaughter the people of Indochina? What is to be gained by having thousands of our young men take their places beside the young men of France and Viet Nam in graves along the jungle trails? Have we so completely lost our perspective, have we so completely abandoned the principles of freedom, have we so willingly denied the legitimacy of our own birthright, that we demand this war? What kind of people have we become?

If we want to make Communists of all the people of Asia, if we want to recruit Communists wholesale throughout the world, if we want to bleed ourselves of all vigor and principle, and if we are ready to send the Statue of Liberty, with Freedom's Torch, to a new home on Red Square in Moscow, then, by all means, let us join the jungle war against the revolutionists fighting colonialism in Indochina.

LETTER FROM ITALY—(Continued)

to afford, and so it goes to the lower middle class, who take it home, happy to have found such bargains.

Of course, there are the leftist parties which promise great things and carry on propaganda through their paper "l'Unità" and through posters. May Day was an important day, every one was gay and festive, and carloads of workers went about singing and waving red flags. The Church fights them by advocating the same principles and promising the same reforms as they do, but she never puts them into practice. In fact, the Church frowns on all movements for civic education and social uplift except those sponsored by herself and watered down with litanies, masses and religious teaching. There are three YMCA centers in Italy, and they have to watch their moves, if they want to go on

unmolested; they have a hard time as it is, for young people are advised to shun them, under pain of excommunication, and whispering campaigns go on against them led by the local priests. In one town the priests were more or less silenced and confused when the wife of the YMCA leader volunteered to play the organ in church for them. This same leader told us that he had been refused a passport to attend the international meeting of Y leaders in Germany, and when he showed that there was no good reason for this refusal, he received it too late to attend.

The International Work Camps, made up chiefly of pacifists willing to contribute without pay to the work of reconstruction, are also suspected. They are branded communists, heretics and spies. People holding city jobs, or practicing professions had better join the right party and show their faces in church if they want to keep their jobs or their clients.

With all due respect to those sincere souls who belong to the established church, I must say that what we have seen to pass for religion here amounts to a great deal of superstition and idolatry with an incredible amount of hypocrisy thrown in. Images, statues and crucifixes are displayed and worshiped in innumerable shrines along the streets; many of them are revoltingly hideous, but all of them have donations of flowers, candles and money. You can hardly go anywhere without meeting a monk, a nun or even a child who thrusts a paper image of a saint under your eyes and begs for money in the name of God and your blessed dead. Forgiveness for sins committed, many days of indulgences (meaning so many days less to be spent in purgatory after death) and the joys of paradise in the after-life are promised to the faithful and those who have masses said for them. Most men smile benignly at these things, but the women are very devout and cause trouble in the family if the men do not pay lip service and obey all church regulations. In Calabria we saw long processions of children bearing flowers and banners with the slogan "Long live Mary, the mother of God!" The children take time from school to go to a nearby town, escorted by their teachers, to visit the bishop or a shrine of some kind, and show their devotion. In Naples we saw a ceremony of laying the foundation stone of a new church (to be paid chiefly with tax money) and saw the cardinal arrive in a luxurious limousine for the occasion, dressed in his ostentatious clothing; we heard the chants and the litanies and his promise to those present of 100 days' indulgence to repay them for being there; the new edifice will be ready in a year, he said... and this made the people beam, even those who live in hovels.

Is Italy going communist? I asked this question in many quarters, and perhaps it is best to report some of the chief answers: Italy will vote communist if that's the only way to get rid of the present government. . . . When your children are hungry and you have no bread, when you only own one pair of shoes and they are broken, you want to give a chance to the party in which you have some hope. . . . We do not know what the communist ideologies are, neither do we care, we are anxious to get work. . . . In towns where they have had communist mayors, reforms have gone on apace. . . . Unless we see more social justice we must turn to the leftist parties. . . . The communist party is strong,

but we must go slow or America will crack down on us. . . . Please tell America to send a committee to investigate conditions in the south, in the little towns and villages, but they must be honest and impartial, then they will understand why we vote communist. . . .

It is our conviction that with due reforms, more social justice and the use of capital (which is now in banks in the name of wealthy landlords) to create work for the unemployed, communism would not stand a chance here. Then, with proper administration of funds, better schools, new roads, bridges and homes could be built; with less nepotism and corruption in governing circles and better teachers in the schools, less bribing and tax evasion on the part of those who are wealthy, things would begin to improve at once. Civic education should be fostered and the church should be prevented from meddling in politics, her fears and superstitions instilled in the young should be forbidden or exposed.

Giovannino Guareschi (who just started a jail term for having exposed certain damaging correspondence of de Gasperi, the prime minister) has very cleverly emphasized the ridiculous situation existing on both sides of the political scene, the leftist groups and the extreme right, which is the Church front. His books with Don Camillo as the chief protagonist have been more widely read abroad than at home, and perhaps for a reason. He shows with a great deal of humour that when an Italian has his stomach full he does not bother about politics, and that he is in fact very easily satisfied.

CORRESPONDENT IN ITALY

REVIEW—(Continued)

of all those who are determined to know for themselves. Thus:

The success of a critical and sceptical approach in science may encourage a sceptical approach in politics or ethics; the discovery of an immensely successful theory of great scope may encourage the quest for a simplified view of human institutions. The example of rapid progress in understanding may lead men to conclude that the root of evil is ignorance and that ignorance can be ended.

Whatever else one may say of Oppenheimer, one thing is clear from these lectures: he is a man who wants no power or authority to coërcé the opinions of his fellows. Unlike the dogmatists of both science and religion, he wastes no emotion in petulance over the fact that human beings delay in accepting the True Faith and conforming their behavior to its rules. It is the angry men in all parties—the angry men who demand assent from their fellows—who are subverting the foundations of a free society, while men like Oppenheimer are laying down the principles of freedom in the only way that it is possible to do so—by appeal to the persuasions of the mind.

SUBSCRIPTION RATES

1 Year \$5 2 Years \$8 3 Years \$12
Readers are invited to send in the names of friends who might be interested in subscribing to MANAS. Free sample issues will be mailed on request.

(Bound copies of Volumes 1 — 6 now available)

MANAS PUBLISHING COMPANY

P. O. Box 112, El Sereno Station, Los Angeles 32, Calif.

